

REMARKS

Claims 1-10 and 17-37 are presently pending in this application. Claims 1, 17, 26, 32 and 37 have been amended in this response.

In the Office Action mailed December 23, 2005, claims 17-23 and 25-37 were rejected. More specifically, the status of the application in light of this Office Action is as follows:

(A) Claims 17-23 and 25-37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,707,309 to Sato et al. ("Sato") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,373,273 to Akram et al. ("Akram"); and

(B) Claim 24 was allowed.

The undersigned attorney wishes to thank the Examiner for engaging in telephone conferences on March 22 and 28, 2006, and requests that this paper constitute the applicants' Interview Summary. During the telephone conferences, the present Office Action, Sato, Akram, claims 17, 26, 32 and 37, and a proposed amendment were discussed. The Examiner agreed that the proposed amendment patentably distinguishes claims 17, 26, 32 and 37 over the applied art. Claims 17, 26, 32 and 37 have been amended accordingly.

A. Response to the Section 103(a) Rejection

Claims 17-23 and 25-37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sato in view of Akram. In light of the agreement reached during the March 22 and 28 telephone conferences, the Section 103(a) rejection of claims 17, 26, 32, and 37 should be withdrawn.

Claims 18-23 and 25 depend from claim 17; claims 27-31 depend from claim 26; and claims 33-36 depend from claim 32. Accordingly, the Section 103(a) rejection of these claims should be withdrawn for at least the reasons discussed above with reference to their respective independent claims and for the additional features of these dependent claims.

B. Allowable Subject Matter

Although the applicants' attorney agrees with the Examiner's conclusion that claim 24 is allowable, the applicants' attorney notes that the claim may be allowable for reasons other than those identified by the Examiner and does not concede that the Examiner's characterization of the terms of the claim and the prior art are correct.

C. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, the pending claims comply with 35 U.S.C. § 112 and are patentable over the applied art. The applicants accordingly request reconsideration of the application and a Notice of Allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call David Dutcher at (206) 359-6465.

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Respectfully submitted,

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